COMMON ERRORS IN WRITING AND SPEAKING

ELLIS

COMMON ERRORS

IN

WRITING AND SPEAKING

WHAT THEY ARE AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

WITH A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON

Pronunciation and Punctuation

BY

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Well, well, the old have had their day, the young must take their turn;
There's something always to forget, and something still to learn.

—*O. W. Holmes.*

INTRODUCTION.

WHAT is the definition of the word "lurid"?

The following is a summary of more than twenty answers to this question:

"Red; glaring; dazzling; crimson; shining; red, with an element of terror; brightly glowing, conveying the idea of cause for fear or dread."

Now, after giving your definition of the word "lurid," examine any good dictionary, and you will be astonished. It may be doubted whether one speaker or writer among fifty uses this word correctly. The general misapprehension of its meaning is beyond explanation, and furnishes another of the many proofs of the universal tendency to commit errors of all kinds.

Here is another test, which demonstrates that a man may look at an object hundreds

and thousands of times without really seeing it.

Take your lead pencil and write on a piece of paper the Roman numerals as they are depicted on the face of your watch. I have never known a person who, when asked to do this for the first time, did not write the figures thus:

I II III IV V VI VII VIII IX X XI XII

That looks right, and yet it contains two mistakes. A watch or clock gives the IV thus—IIII; and the second hand obscures one figure (generally VI), so that it does not appear on the face at all.

If you have a friend who prides himself on his skill in orthography, ask him to spell the following words, most of which are in common use:

Tranquillity, dumfounded, harebrained, accordion, plaguy, indelible, deleble, sibyl, numskull, ecstasy, privilege, rarefy, typify, carroty.

If he spell the majority correctly, you are warranted in complimenting him.

Suppose a line to be drawn from the city

of New York directly westward, until it intersects the meridian which runs through the westernmost territory of the United States, about where will the half-way point be? That is to say, if you wish to cut the line in the middle, where should it be done?

In the neighborhood of Omaha? Or Cheyenne? Or possibly Salt Lake City?

In none of these: it will be in the Pacific Ocean, to the westward of San Francisco.

Are you aware that a blanket as large as the State of Texas could be wrapped around England, Ireland, and Scotland so as to hide them from sight? That part of that State is two hundred miles nearer to the Pacific than to the Gulf of Mexico? That each of fourteen of its counties is larger than the State of Delaware? That its northernmost point lies in about the same latitude as Norfolk, Virginia? That one portion is nearer to the Great Salt Lake than to the Gulf? That hundreds of square miles are farther from the sea than Idaho, Nevada, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio?

If you were asked to name the cities which

have been the capital of the United States, would not the list be: Philadelphia, New York, and Washington? And yet six other towns have borne that honor—Baltimore, Lancaster, York, Princeton, Annapolis, and Trenton.

How many people know that throughout one of the great wars in our history our flag contained fifteen instead of thirteen stripes? That Oliver Hazard Perry, the hero of Lake Erie, was promoted to the rank of captain after first being commodore? That we have had a Vice-President who resigned his office?

The foregoing rambling statements will serve as an introduction to what follows. Men of education unconsciously fall into errors of speaking and writing. To correct an expression made by another so as to be overheard by third persons is in bad taste and almost certain to offend. If made at all, such correction should be made privately, and then with the utmost delicacy and tact. If you lack discretion, do not attempt it. It is no sin if one's words violate grammatical rules, and one of the most disagreeable persons is

he who is continually correcting the speech of others.

Suppose we examine some of the most common errors of speech and pen, and try to formulate a few rules which may be helpful to us. We shall find plenty of occupation in watching ourselves, without paying heed to others (and the writer confesses that he is among the guilty).

We will make no effort to discuss the more involved questions of taste, in which good authorities justify a divergence of form, but give attention to the simple, ordinary mistakes into which most of us daily fall. To apprehend and correct these errors, no technical knowledge of grammar is necessary; but, at the same time, a person must have some conception of the relations of words and ideas, and be able to understand the reason why certain expressions are incorrect.

It was not long since that, while watching a game of base-ball between the representative nines of Yale and Princeton, I became interested in the actions of a young man at my side, who was laboriously ruling a sheet

of paper, so as to help him in keeping the score of the game. I watched him some minutes until he appeared to have the sheet ready, when I saw him write on a blank space at the bottom, the word "ares."

"May I ask the meaning of that?" I inquired.

With an expression of pitying contempt, he replied:

"Why, them's 'errors,' of course."

"Ah! I might have known it."

The suggestions in the pages which follow are not for him who spells in that original fashion, nor for him who says "I seen," nor "I done," without knowing that he is speaking incorrectly. Such an one is beyond the reach of instruction, and time would be wasted in the attempt. He can serve only as a lighthouse to warn others off the coast.

Nov. 1894. E. S. E.

COMMON ERRORS
IN
WRITING AND SPEAKING.

Some words on language may be well applied,
And take them kindly, though they touch your pride;
Words lead to things; a scale is more precise,—
Coarse speech, bad grammar, swearing, drinking, vice. —*O. W. Holmes.*

INASMUCH as the most common errors are made regardless of all system, regularity, or rules, let us consider them somewhat in the same manner, taking them, if possible, in the order of their frequency, or as we come across them.

I.

"Ain't."

"Is he addicted to the use of tobacco?"

"No; he ain't."

The best that can be said of the word

"ain't" is that it is an abbreviation of "are not," or of "am not"; it has no right whatever to stand for "is not." In any case, it is distinctly a vulgarism, which no careful speaker will use.

II.

"You and I" for "You and Me."

This is one of the most common errors of speech. Even well educated persons often preface a confidential statement with the words, "Between you and I," when they should say, "Between you and me." The old rule of grammar is invariable: "Between" is a preposition, governing the two objective pronouns, which must be respectively "you" and "me." The rule thus laid down is so simple that its violation is inexcusable.

III.

"It is Me," for "It is I."

This common mistake needs only to be named. "It is I; be not afraid," was the assurance of the Saviour, when his disciples were alarmed by his appearance. If you are

charged with a certain act which you wish to deny, do not say, "It wasn't me," but "It wasn't I." Transpose the brief sentence and make it, "Me wasn't it," and the error is apparent.

Similarly, it must be "It is he," "It is she," "It is we," "It is they," and not "It is him," "It is her," "It is us," "It is them."

It is related of the late Dr. McCosh, of Princeton College, that one night he hurried over to the dormitory to suppress some merry students who were making a great noise. He rapped, but received no reply. A second time he hammered on the door and demanded admittance.

"Who's there?"

"It's me, President McCosh."

"You're a liar," was the reply; "if you were old Jimmy you would say 'It is I.'"

IV.

"They" for "He."

"Every man or woman should do their duty." "If you look a man straight in the face, they will flinch." "If any one could see

all the sorrow in the world, they would never smile again."

These and similar errors are common even among cultured people. You will see them in carefully written articles, and I have heard them made by college professors and leading divines. An examination of each of the sentences will show that the speaker or writer has in view a single person. "Every man" or "every woman" means a single individual. For instance, you can only look one man straight in the face at the same moment. The pronoun, therefore, which refers to that single person should not be in the plural number. The correct form is: "Every man or woman should do his duty;" "If you look a man straight in the face, he will flinch;" "If any one could see all the sorrow in the world, he would never smile again."

In the first sentence, the pronoun "his" of necessity refers either to man or woman. Many scholars contend that the coining of a pronoun with a common gender—that is, either feminine or masculine—is a necessity. Until such a pronoun is recognized, how-

ever, the rule is that the masculine must be used.

Naturally this mistake is more likely to occur when the noun is separated by a considerable number of words from the pronoun which must agree with it in number. A moment's thought, however, will show any one his (not their) error.

V.

"Expect" for "Suspect" or "Suppose" or "Presume."

Several weeks ago a clergyman said: "Now, my dear children, I expect some of you are looking for a funny speech from me, but I'm afraid you will be disappointed."

This incorrect use of the word "expect" is common. Properly, we "expect" something which is in the future or yet to take place; we expect a visit from our friends, or we expect to have fair weather to-morrow. "Suspect" refers to a condition already in existence. The clergyman "suspected" a certain state of mind on the part of his young hearers. He supposed or presumed that their

minds were already in that condition. He could not have "expected" that it was going to be, for his opening words removed the impression of the children, who were the only ones that were "expecting."

"Suspect," "suppose," and "presume" all refer to the present, while "expect" clearly relates to the future, and a little care will enable any one to preserve the proper distinction.

VI.

"Try and Do," for "Try to Do."

Some weeks ago I read this statement in a leading newspaper: "For Congress to expect success is as absurd as to try and walk on water." Now, if any person tries to walk on water, *and does* walk on water, wherein lies the absurdity? Trial and success cannot be absurd, though the trial of a thing which is clearly impossible is absurd. The man who tries to walk on water commits an absurdity, for it is beyond his ability to succeed. He may try to walk, but he cannot try *and* walk.

"Try to" is always the correct expression—not "try and."

VII.

"Shall" and "Will."

Why should there be any confusion in the use of these words?

"I shall buy a pair of skates for you and you will be pleased, while a sled for Tom will please him." Here the auxiliaries "shall" and "will" are used properly.

"I will buy a pair of skates for you and you shall be pleased, while a sled for Tom shall satisfy him." This, too, is perfectly good English, but its meaning is different. In the first sentence, a simple statement or announcement of a line of action and its consequences is made. In the second, the implication is that the parent has heard some objection from his two boys, and makes known his decision in emphatic terms. He says he "*will*" make the purchase, and the youths "*shall*" be satisfied. A slight emphasis on the words "shall" and "will" will show the distinction clearly.

The general rule may be thus stated—in a simple prediction or announcement of some future action or event, "shall" is used with the first person, "will" with the second and third: "I shall," "We shall," "You will," "He will," "They will." But if the announcement is made with emphasis—as a promise in answer to a request, or as a determination taken in the face of opposition—then the usage of "shall" and "will" is precisely reversed, "will" going with the first person and "shall" with the second and third. For instance, "I will do it, I promise you;" "I will go—nothing shall stop me."

The proper use of "would" and "should" corresponds to that of "will" and "shall."

VIII.

"Funny."

One of the most prevalent errors among us Americans is the conversational misuse of the word "funny."

"It was the funniest thing that the man should have killed his brother, sister, and then himself," remarked a teacher in refer-

ring to a tragedy; and, somewhat later, in speaking of an experience in Boston, he said: "How funny that I, who have never been subject to colds, was taken down with pneumonia and narrowly escaped death!" It was singular, strange, extraordinary, perhaps; but surely there was not much "fun" in a revolting murder or a serious attack of pneumonia.

This error is one of those unaccountable ones which have insinuated themselves into our speech, but it is so glaring that nothing more is needed than a mention of its absurdity.

IX.

"Climb Down."

"The traveler found greater difficulty in climbing down the side of the mountain than in ascending it." Inasmuch as "climb" means to ascend, a more difficult task than ascending or descending the mountain side is to explain how a traveler can "climb" (or ascend) downward.

X.

Inappropriate Adjectives.

We are great offenders in this respect. I was once sitting in a railway train, directly behind a young clergyman, who was conversing with the gentleman beside him. It was during the civil war, and they were discussing one of the great battles, in which there had been terrible carnage, and a display of good and bad generalship.

The clergyman noticed that we were listening to his words, and continued in an oracular strain:

"The battle was badly managed, but the government is learning who are the competent leaders, and who the incompetent. The fact is, we haven't had a well fought battle thus far; but depend upon it, we shall soon have plenty of them. I have no doubt that the next engagement between the Army of the Potomac and that of Northern Virginia will be a real pretty battle."

On the opposite side of the car sat a wounded veteran of the Army of the Potomac,

going home on a furlough. He looked across at the budding orator, statesman, and general, and, twisting his countenance into a quizzical expression, repeated the words, "Pretty battle, oh ——!" Nearly every one broke into laughter, while the clergyman flushed, and from that time forward modulated his tones so that the soldier could not overhear him.

How absurd to refer to the thunderous Niagara Falls, or to stupendous mountain scenery, as "pretty," or "nice," or "lovely"! How ridiculous to speak of a pleasant experience as a "grand time" or an "elegant time," or a "gorgeous time"!

A young lady once described a sermon as "real 'cute." Can a more absurd use of an adjective be imagined?

The tendency among young people is to extravagant expression. If a boy or a girl desires to show the effect of some humorous anecdote or occurrence, he informs us that the spectators or hearers "went wild," "they just screamed," they "fell into convulsions," or "were paralyzed."

An invitation to some social gathering is acknowledged with "Thanks, awfully;" and which of us cannot sympathize with the dude who remarked to the lady whom he had escorted home, one rare night in June, "I long to linger longer, but it gets so awfully late so awfully early"?

Extravagance of expression is peculiarly American, and often rises to humor. Who can restrain a smile at the assertion of the old farmer who said that, when he fell from a load of hay, he struck the earth so hard that he made a bulge in China, or of the commercial traveler, who declared that he chased a railway train one day in July until he became so heated that he was not thoroughly cooled off until the following Christmas?

XI.

Slang.

The subject of inappropriate adjectives naturally suggests that of slang, to which no persons are more addicted than Americans. Most orthoepists issue a general warning

against the use of slang under any circumstances. All such warnings are useless. We have used and always shall use slang, and I may as well confess that, under certain restrictions, I am not opposed to it.

Coarse, vulgar slang is condemned by all with any pretension to taste, but many of our colloquial expressions are more forceful and suggestive than entire sentences of unexceptionable English. A single word sometimes tells a whole story. For instance, when Henry Ward Beecher referred to a politician, who after many subterfuges and vain tricks had been detected and cast aside, as being "played out," he needed to add nothing to complete the picture. If a Westerner speaks of a man who, having failed in business, has "lain down," we can have no possible doubt of his meaning. The person who is "squelched" knows his fate no better than we who hear of the fact, and a man that is "paralyzed" by some misfortune understands his situation no more vividly than those who are told of it. John Phœnix once described a man eating a watermelon with the juice "squizzling"

from the corners of his mouth. One is tempted to wish that the dictionaries contained that word.

There are scores of expressions, all coming within the same category, which lend to language a picturesqueness and vividness that can be gained from no other source. It is idle to formulate a wholesale condemnation of slang. We shall always be a slang-speaking and a slang-loving people. But we can refrain from an over-indulgence in it, and from all approach to the language of the slums. Employ it sparingly, and, paradoxical as the advice may seem, strive to show taste in its use.

It is noteworthy that many terms which at first are purely slang, become recognized as legitimate English words, and are thoroughly incorporated into the language. For instance, all the late editions of the dictionaries give the word "boycott," which arose from the ostracism of Captain Boycott, an Irish land agent, in 1880.

XII.

"Don't."

This word, although clearly an abbreviation of "do not," is improperly used by many. Thus, "John obeys the instructions of his teacher, but his brother Will don't make any pretense of doing so." In other words, "Will *do not* make any pretense of doing so." "A course of evil-doing don't pay," that is "*do not* pay." If a speaker will bear in mind the real meaning of "don't," he will hardly misuse it. It is proper to say that "I don't," or "they don't," "or "you don't," but "don't" is an abbreviation of "do not," and is never correctly used for "does not."

XIII.

The Infinitive Sign "To."

Perhaps it cannot be claimed that the separation of the infinitive verb from its sign "to" is more than a violation of good taste and an offense against the practice of the best writers. The rule, however, which I heard

a te his class is an excellent one: "N any word between 'to' and its ver . the classical writers does so, and the rule has no exception."

Such expressions as these are common: "He moved to indefinitely postpone;" "He tried to quickly make his way to the platform." The speaker was moved to gratefully acknowledge the compliment;" "The lateness of the hour made it necessary to greatly hurry proceedings;" "The question caused him to laughingly (or indignantly) respond," etc.

It is preferable to say: "He moved indefinitely to postpone," or "to postpone indefinitely;" "He tried to make his way quickly to the platform," and so on.

XIV.

"Lie" and "Lay."

There is much confusion in the use of three verbs, similar in form, but different in meaning. These are the verbs "lie," to tell a falsehood; "lie," to recline, and "lay," to place in position, or make to recline. The

chief difficulty is with the second word, meaning to recline as when we sleep.

With the first word, "lie," signifying to tell a falsehood, there is comparatively little opportunity of going wrong. It is regular in its forms and changes. If I tell a falsehood to-day, I lie; if I do it next week, I shall lie; if I did it yesterday, I lied, or I did lie: that is all there is about it.

So far we have not troubled the reader with technical terms; but here we must make an exception, to the extent of explaining the difference between a transitive and an intransitive verb. An intransitive verb simply expresses action; as, I stand, I run, I think. A transitive verb expresses action upon some object; as, I read a book, I throw a stone, I hit Tom. Herein lies the main distinction between "lie," meaning to recline, and "lay," meaning to place in position. "Lie" is intransitive; "lay," which is of kindred derivation, is the causative or transitive form of the same root. I lay a book on the table; a wrestler lays his opponent on his back, a weary person may lay himself down to sleep,

and the hen lays eggs. In all these cases, the verb "lay" expresses action upon some specified object.

"Lay" is regular in the formation of its tenses. In the present, I lay an object on some support; in the future I shall lay it, and in the past I laid it in such a position. There need be no mistake in the use of this word.

The trouble is in properly employing the word "lie," when it means to recline or rest. Here are some of the most common forms of mistake:

"Where is my book?"

"It lays on the table."

"How were you employed this morning?"

"I did not feel well and laid down."

"What has become of Mary?"

"She has gone to her room to lay down."

Each use of the verb "lie" in the sentences given is wrong. It will help to make our suggestion clear if we correct the sentences:

"Where is my book?"

"It lies on the table."

"How were you employed this morning?"

"I did not feel well and lay down."

"What has become of Mary?"

"She has gone to her room to lie down."

Remember these two facts respecting the word "lie," to recline or rest. It is "lie" in the present and future, and "lay" in the simple past. The prevalence of error on these points justifies us in giving the conjugation of the verb:

Present.	Simple Past.
I lie.	I lay.
You lie (or thou liest).	You lay (or thou layest).
He lies.	He lay.
Plural.	**Plural.**
We lie.	We lay.
You lie.	You lay.
They lie.	They lay.

The present participle is "lying" and the past participle "lain." We should say, "While lying upon the ground, he took cold," or "Having lain exposed to the draught, he became ill."

Never use the word "laid" as a part of the verb "lie," and you will avoid a glaring error.

One day, when I was present at a session of the House of Assembly of the Legislature of New Jersey, a member rose and said:

"Mr. Speaker, I move to lie that motion on the table."

The ungrammatical motion was promptly seconded, whereupon the Speaker said:

"It is moved to lie the motion on the table. All in favor will say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' Carried; the motion lays on the table."

A few minutes later I noticed another error, which may be mentioned here, although it has no connection with "lie" and "lay." A member, in the course of his remarks, declared with emphasis:

"Mr. Speaker, this is an important matter. If the facts which have been brought forward are true, a committee of investigation should be appointed."

Now, if a *fact* isn't *true*, it isn't a *fact*. The honorable gentleman meant to say, "If these allegations are facts," or "are true." This misuse of the word "fact" is quite common among persons who ought to know better.

XV.

"Who" and "Whom."

"Our readers can learn who to patronize by examining our advertising columns;" "Who do you mean?" "Who is this meant for?" "Whom do you think will be the purchaser? "Whom was the man meant by the insinuation of the speaker?"

Here we have a bundle of flagrant errors. A slight knowledge of grammar will suffice to fix the correct form in our memory. "Who" is always in the nominative case—that is, it *does* or *is* something; while "whom" is always in the objective case—that is, it is the object of the action.

In the first sentence, "Our readers can learn who to patronize," "who" is the object of the verb "patronize," and should therefore be "whom." In the second sentence, "who" is the object of the verb "mean," and should also be "whom." In the third ("Who is this meant for?") "who" is the object of the preposition "for," and should again become "whom;" as will be seen clearly if we change

the order of the words, and ask: "For whom is this meant?"

"Whom do you think will be the purchaser?" Here "whom" means the person who *will be* the purchaser, and should be changed to "who." This mistake is one that occurs several times in that curious book, "Society as I Have Found It," by Ward McAllister. For instance, at the beginning of the second chapter Mr. McAllister speaks of his godmother, "whom I always felt would endow me with all her worldly goods." Of course, he means "*who* would endow me."

In the last sentence given in the first paragraph of this section ("Whom was the man meant in the insinuation of the speaker?") "whom" is the subject of "was," the very next word to it, and should be "who." A little study will make all these distinctions clear.

Other forms are the following: "The man whom they all wish to be elected is worthy of support;" "The man who, to secure votes, pays bribes, commits a crime." In the first sentence "whom" is the object of "wish," and is therefore correct. In the second, "who"

is the subject of "pays," and again is the proper form.

XVI.

The Misuse of Adverbs for Adjectives.

"You do not look well."

"No; I am feeling badly."

"That is a fragrant flower which you have in your hand."

"Yes; it smells sweetly."

In order to make the foregoing snatch of conversation grammatical, it ought to read thus:

"You do not seem to be well."

"No; I am feeling ill."

"That is a fragrant flower that you have in your hand."

"Yes; it smells sweet."

The error here lies in the use of an adverb instead of an adjective. An adverb qualifies a verb; that is, it explains the manner in which the verb's action is accomplished. If my friend attempted to employ his fingers, as a blind man does, and met with poor success, it would be proper for him to say he

"felt badly;" but such is not his meaning. He wishes to say that the condition of his body is bad, that he is not well; and "ill" is the best word to use.

If we can imagine a flower the possessor of a nose which served it admirably, it would be proper to say the flower "smells sweetly," but our evident meaning is that the flower is fragrant, and the adjective should take the place of the adverb.

Should we say the sun "shines bright," or "brightly"? Here the distinction is finer, but the tendency of correct speakers and writers is in favor of "the sun shines bright," inasmuch as the quality rather than its manner of shining is meant.

I once heard a lawyer say, in summing up his case: "It illy becomes my opponent to say," etc. The word "illy" is a barbarous and incorrect formation. "Ill" is the proper adverb; he should have said, "It ill becomes," etc.

The converse of the rule holds true: Adjectives should never take the place of adverbs. "He is a real good boy," should be

"a really good boy." "He walks more rapid than his brother," should be "more rapidly." "I esteem him higher than you," should be "more highly than you."

XVII.

Pet Words and Expressions.

The other evening a gentleman at our dinner table related an anecdote about a little fellow of his acquaintance, while the rest listened with close attention.

"This boy had been forbidden by his mother to go in swimming," remarked the gentleman, "but one afternoon, when he came home, she noticed that Bobby had his shirt on with the wrong side out. She called him to her. 'My son,' she asked, 'why do you have your shirt on with the wrong side out?' 'I did that climbing over the fence,' was the reply."

At this point in the story, the listeners indulged in a smile, and a young lady on the left, a graduate of Vassar College, exclaimed:

"Isn't that delicious?"

"But," resumed the narrator, "Bobby's

mother explained to him that such a change in his garment from the cause named was quite impossible. 'I know you have been in swimming,' she continued. 'Do not tell me a falsehood.'

"'Well, mother,' replied the boy, 'I—that is, I fell in; Jim Brown pushed me in.'

"'How was it you did not wet your clothing?'

"'Well, you see, mother, I knowed from the way Jim Brown looked that he meant to push me in, and I knowed, too, that you wouldn't like it if I got my clothes wet, so I took 'em off.'"

Various pleased comments greeted this second installment of the anecdote. The Vassar graduate laughed louder than before, and exclaimed:

"That is real delicious!"

"But," resumed the narrator, "Bobby's mother was not yet through with him. She was grieved at his turpitude, and said: 'Now, my son, it is my duty to punish you; go right upstairs and prepare yourself.'

"Without a word, Bobby went panting up

the stairs and into his room. He was gone a long time, and by and by his mother fancied she heard the murmur of a voice from within. She walked softly upstairs, and listened at the door. Bobby was on his knees, praying hard. 'O Lord,' said the sobbing boy, 'if you ever want to help a little feller, now's your chance!'"

At this, the whole table broke into laughter. The Vassar graduate leaned back in her chair and clasped her hands.

"Of course," she said, "the mother didn't punish him after *that*. I think that story is the most delicious I ever heard."

Now, perhaps I have taken a roundabout way of exemplifying a common fault. I refer to the habit of using pet words or expressions. Many people are familiar with a round of adjectives or adverbs or phrases, which, though perhaps no more than half a dozen in number, answer for all occasions.

In the first place, the Vassar girl made an unfortunate choice of an adjective, for "delicious" should refer to the flavor of something eaten or drunk; but her chief offense

was in using the word repeatedly, until what little force it might once have had was gone.

Just now, when a man wishes to say that his sentiments accord with those you express, he remarks, "That's right," and he will nod his head and repeat those two words as if there was no other possible way of saying what he means.

Surely our language is sufficiently rich in expression to furnish all the variety a speaker or writer can require, and nothing gives a more pleasing finish to our sentences than the use of appropriate words.

XVIII.

"Those Kind."

Such expressions as the following are often met: "Those kind of people are not fit associates;" "These sort of objections are trivial."

In the first sentence the noun "kind" is qualified by "those." The noun being a singular one, the adjective pronoun joined to it should also be singular, and the sentence should read: "That kind of people, etc." So in the second sentence, for the reason just

given, the expression should be: "This sort of objections is trivial."

Both of these reconstructed sentences have an unpleasant sound, and the best course to adopt is to give them a different form. Thus, "People of that kind are not fit associates;" "Objections of that sort," etc.

XIX.

"Sit" and "Set."

Who ever heard any member of a farmer's family refer to a "sitting hen"? If you do so, your use of the word "sitting" is likely to be attributed either to ignorance or affectation. Yet a moment's reflection shows that the reason why a hen is thus characterized, is because, during the period of incubation, she sits on the eggs. The term "sitting hen," therefore, is correct.

Many mistakes are made with "sit" and "set," a pair of words whose mutual relation is like that between "lie" and "lay." "Set" is a transitive verb, "sit" an intransitive one. "I sit in the chair to-day; I expect

to sit in the same chair to-morrow, because I sat in it all last summer, as in truth I have sat in it for years." These are the only variations of the verb "sit," and are easily remembered. It is the intrusion of the other word, "set," which causes the confusion. This is an active verb, and it has but the single form for all its tenses.

The surgeon sets a limb; the trapper sets his trap; the miser sets his face against charity; we set the chair in place. But the hen sits, my coat sits well, and we all sit in our chairs.

I have heard a good brother in prayer thank the Lord "because he ever sot out in this blessed way." "Sot" is an outrageous perversion, known only in the backwoods.

We have said that "set" is a transitive verb, and such is the general rule; yet there are certain exceptional cases in which it is correctly used intransitively, without an object. Here are instances: "The sun sets in the west;" "The current sets in shore;" "Wet cement sets as it dries."

"Raise" and "rise" are another pair of

verbs in whose use a similar confusion is found. "Raise" is transitive, "rise" intransitive.

Every one knows that to "raise" an object is to lift it; therefore we never "rise" anything. We raise an object from the ground; the employer raises (that is, lifts to a higher figure) the salary of his clerk; the clerk, if dishonest, may raise trouble; the farmer raises corn (that is, he figuratively lifts it out of the ground); a player in a certain gambling game may raise his opponent (causing him to lift the stake to a higher amount), and so on.

I once noticed that in a question concerning amateur theatricals, the gentleman in charge of the business tried to avoid the use of the expression "curtain raiser," and when compelled to use it, he mumbled the word. Finally I asked him whether he had any difficulty in pronouncing it. "It isn't that," he replied, "but I can never feel certain whether it ought to be 'curtain raiser,' or 'curtain riser.'" When he came to reflect, however, that a piece known as a "curtain raiser" is

one which lifts the curtain, or causes it to go up, the distinction was fixed in his memory.

Few persons would say, "The sun raises in the east," yet they might say, "The river raises several feet during the spring freshet," or "It raised more than a foot last night." By bearing in mind the distinction I have pointed out, "raise" and "rise" should be kept distinct, together with "set" and "sit" and "lay" and "lie."

XX.

"If."

Some confusion regarding the effect of the word "if" upon a verb is excusable. The rule is that the subjunctive mood (which expresses doubt, uncertainty, or an assumed condition or contingency) must be used after "if," when the idea of futurity is conveyed. Thus "I will go, if he come after me." Here my going is dependent upon his coming after me. Whether he will do so or not, remains for the future to show. There being doubt, I use the words "if he come," instead of "if he comes."

Suppose now that my friend has arrived, but I am uncertain of his wishes, and say, "If you be here to invite me to accompany you, I will accept your invitation." There is no doubt about my friend being present. He is already here, and my only uncertainty is regarding his errand. I should say, "If you are here to invite me," etc.

XXI.

The Wrong Use of Tenses.

How hopelessly involved many writers become with their tenses! I have before me a pleasing juvenile story, written by an author of reputation, in which one of the characters is made to say: "I would have been glad to have gone, had I not thought that he had a wish that I should not have done so." Now how much better the sentence reads when written grammatically, thus: "I should have been glad to go, had I not thought that he did not wish me to do so."

When I say, "I should have been glad," the time of the whole sentence is shifted backward. "I meant to have bought a pair of

gloves yesterday" should be "I meant to buy a pair of gloves yesterday;" for "meant" gives the necessary effect of past tense or time. *Two* moves backward are not required.

"I noticed that he appeared to have suffered from exposure." This sentence is correct, and the student will readily perceive the distinction.

Take the expression, "I should have been glad to go." To say that I "should have been glad to have gone," throws the act of going back into the time previous to that at which the wish was formed—which is not meant by the speaker. But in the sentence, "I noticed that he appeared to have suffered," the logical sequence of events is observed. When I noticed that the person appeared to have suffered, I observed something which must have taken place *before* the observation was made. Consequently, it must be thrown still further back in the past, than the time of the observation. This is done by the words "appeared to have suffered."

Such expressions as "You hadn't ought to disobey your parents" are sometimes met.

Here the "had" is an offensive superfluity. How much more euphonious is the correct sentence: "You ought not to disobey your parents."

XXII.

"Whence," "Hence," and "Thence."

We sometimes see such phrases as "You know not from whence he came; he walked from thence to his home; he shall go from hence." If in each of these the word "from" is stricken out, no fault can be found. The word is superfluous, and only cumbers the expression.

XXIII.

Superfluous Words.

A bad habit formed in youth causes an educated friend of mine to use such expressions as, "I have a wish *for* to see that accomplished" "I laid the book on *to* the table." My friend is aware that he ought to omit the italicized words, and he would do so, but for the persistency with which the habit clings to him. The moral is obvious.

"We must continue *on* in this direction in order to reach our destination." Since no one can continue without continuing *on*, why use the superfluous word?

"He sprang off *of* the wagon;" "The apples were plucked off *of* the trees." Here again the sentences are greatly improved by dropping the "of." Indeed, "off of" is worse than a redundancy; it is a positive and vulgar error.

"When the stars are shining, then, love, think *on* me." Why not ask the dear one to think *of* me? "On" was used in this sense by Shakspere, but the usage is obsolete and should therefore be avoided.

"I will pay you a larger sum than you think *for*." Again the preposition is superfluous.

"He shrank from *before* the scene." (Omit *before*.)

"*Down* until the present." (Omit *down*.)

"The congregation will please rise *up*." (Omit *up*.)

"He decided *upon* what he would refer to in his speech." (Omit *upon*.)

"Since all must die, it is, *therefore*, proper to think of death." (Omit *therefore*.)

"He restored *again* the sentences which had been struck out." (Omit *again*.)

In the following sentences, the words italicized are so similar in meaning that one of them should be omitted:

"The *welfare* and *prosperity* of our country has been great."

"He has visited America in order to inquire into our *institutions* and *system of government*."

"To all *intents* and *purposes*, your letter is a confession of the charges made against you."

"I have received great *pleasure* and *satisfaction* from the perusal of the volume."

"In the Attic commonwealth it was the *privilege* and *birthright* of every citizen to rail *aloud* and *in public*."

"I was so impressed by the sermon that when I walked homeward, my mind was filled with *a great many* solemn thoughts."

XXIV.

"In" and "Into."

We stand in the water, but step *into* the mud; we ride *in* the cars and go *into* church. To generalize, we speak of rest *in* a place, and of motion *into* a place.

When we talk of "running races in a field" it may not sound like rest in a place, but a moment's thought will show that the rule is not broken; the runners, though in motion, remain within the limits of the field.

The distinction, however, is not always fully maintained. There are many phrases in which "in" is used, by correct speakers and writers, with the sense of "into;" as, for instance, "to put seed in the ground," "to put one's trust in God," and so forth. But it will not do to reverse this, and use "into" instead of "in." Such expressions as "There's nothing into it" are quite intolerable.

XXV.

"Posted" and "Balance."

A person who is well informed is sometimes said to be "well posted." The expres-

sion is vulgar, and should not be employed. "Balance" is another piece of what may be called "business English." From meaning that which makes two accounts equal, it comes to be used in a general way as equivalent to "remainder." For instance, some one may tell us that "he saw ten men; six of them were negroes, and the balance Italians." Bad, decidedly bad.

XXVI.

"In Our Midst."

When a fire company loses one of its members through death, a meeting of the rest is generally called, at which a series of resolutions is introduced by the following preamble:

"*Whereas*, it has pleased Almighty God to remove from our midst our late brother and associate, John Smith," etc.

Now in the first place it is more than probable that the Almighty had nothing to do with the removal of John Smith. Smith may have stood in the way of a falling wall,

he may have been run over by a truck, he may have fallen from the tenth story of a house, or he may have indulged in any one of a hundred other unhealthful experiments. At any rate, it is unjust to lay the blame upon his Creator.

Be that as it may, John Smith's domicile was never in "our midst." It is to be presumed that he was as untrammeled in his movements as the rest of his associates, and it is therefore improper to refer to him as having lived in "our midst." He occupied more roomy and comfortable quarters.

XXVII.

A Hackneyed Phrase.

Probably nine persons in ten, when they sit down to write a communication to a newspaper, in reply to some published statement, open their address to the editor thus: "My attention has been called to an article in your columns," etc. This phrase is worn out, and should be allowed to rest indefinitely.

XXVIII.

"Differ With" and "Differ From."

"I have listened attentively to your argument, but beg to differ with you."

"In looks the son differs from his father."

Both of these sentences are correct. The rule, established by the practice of careful speakers and writers, is that two persons who are physically unlike differ *from* each other; two who disagree in opinion differ *from* each other or *with* each other.

XXIX.

"Hanged" and "Hung."

A popular text-book of history lies before me, in which occurs the following reference to Major André: "He was hung October 2, 1780." Whenever a person or animal is put to death by being suspended with a noose round his neck, he is "hanged." A picture frame or other inanimate object is "hung."

XXX.

"Transpire."

A bright young man in Wall Street, some time since, remarked that the weather was

so warm that it caused him to transpire. He had a purpose in making the remark, as became evident when, on being called to account, he offered to make a wager that he had used the word correctly. His offer was quickly accepted by several acquaintances and the question was referred to the dictionary. (The young man had taken good care to consult it some time before.) It was found that he had won all his wagers, the usage in question being recognized, though rare.

Another meaning of the word "transpire" is, to become known; but it should not be used—as it frequently is by careless speakers—as if it were synonymous with "to take place" or "to occur."

XXXI.

"Got."

This ill sounding word can be omitted more frequently than many suppose.

"What have you got in that basket?" "I have got some fine peaches." "I've got five dollars in my pocket." In all these and sim-

ilar cases, "got" is superfluous, and the expression is improved by its omission.

XXXII.

"Learn" and "Teach."

We have been taught from time immemorial that a teacher *teaches* and a pupil learns.

It is a proof of what may be called the elasticity of our language that the word "learn" was at one time interchangeable with "teach;" but it has long been obsolete in this sense. Such sentences as "I will learn you better than to disobey me," are the exclusive vocabulary of the backwoods.

XXXIII.

"Guess" or "Reckon" for "Suppose" or "Think."

"Do you think it will rain today?"

"I guess it will."

"Is William older than his brother?"

"I reckon so."

In these two answers the word "think" or "suppose" should be substituted for "guess"

or "reckon." "Guess" is a good English word, but its excessive reiteration by most Americans has made it nauseating. "Reckon" and "calculate," in this sense, have no literary authority.

XXXIV.

"Fix" for "Arrange" or "Prepare."

"Can you fix matters satisfactorily with your creditors?"

"I have reason to believe that I can *arrange* matters so that every one will be satisfied."

"Then you will fix up my room for me?"

"No; I will *prepare* it for your coming."

XXXV.

"Some" or "Any" in an Adverbial Sense.

"Are you familiar with the subject of astronomy?"

"I have studied it some" (somewhat, or to some extent).

"Are you acquainted with physiology?"

"No; I have not studied it any" (at all).

XXXVI.

"So" for "So That."

"He stood aside so she could pass." Americans too commonly, in conversation, abbreviate "so that" to "so." The usage is incorrect, and must be proscribed.

XXXVII.

Miscellaneous Mistakes.

In the following sentences, the incorrect expressions are italicized and the correct ones generally placed in parenthesis.

"Do you live on three meals a day?"

"I have not thus far, but I shall *try* the experiment" (make the experiment).

"Have the accused parties been acquitted?"

"Not *as* I know" (not that I know).

"How do you feel this morning?"

"*First rate*" (very well).

"Will you accompany me to town?"

"I *had* rather not" (would rather not).

"What is your opinion of the new rule in college?"

"I think we *had* better obey it without question" (would better).

"When will you answer his letter?"

"*Right away*" (immediately).

"Is he the *party* to whom you referred?"

"No; he is the person."

"You will not fail to keep your engagement?"

"No; I *promise* you I shall not" (assure you).

"Will you accompany me to New York?"

"I will meet you at the *depot*" (station. A depot primarily is a warehouse or storehouse or military station. There is authority among American writers for using the term for a railway station, but the word station is preferable).

"Will your friend, Mr. Jones, go with us?"

"I do not know whether he will or *no*" (not).

"How long will you remain in the city?"

"I shall *stop* for several days" (stay or remain).

"What a *cunning* little hand your daughter has" (dainty or small).

"Can you spar as well as you can fence?"

"Equally *as* well" (equally well).

"Does my hat look *good* enough to wear to church?" (well enough).

"Somebody else's book" is a phrase that is often criticised by purists, but as a matter of fact it is perfectly correct, and has abundant authority. "Somebody's else," the suggested alternative, is inelegant and pedantic.

"In this matter I wish you to act *like* I do" (as I do).

"I do not think my coat is *as* good as yours" ("not so good as" is preferable).

"Your composition is not as well written as it ought to be" (not so well written).

"The five boys divided the cherries *between* them" (among them. "Between" should be used when only two persons are referred to. This error is a common one).

"One of the *gents* ruined his *pants*" (gentlemen ruined his trousers. Under no circumstances use the words "gents" and "pants").

"The rule I have named seldom *or ever* fails" (seldom if ever, or seldom or never).

"Would you just *as soon* obey his request?" (just as lief).

"He is *kind of* eccentric in his manner" (somewhat).

"What can be the matter *of* him?" (matter with him).

"I am sorry to say I have enjoyed bad health this summer" (have been in poor health. Enjoyment implies pleasure, and the expression quoted, therefore, is a contradiction of terms. "I have not enjoyed good health" would be a correct version).

"In most of the States *corporeal* punishment has been abolished in the schools" (corporal).

"What are you doing *of?*" (Omit *of*. Its insertion is a gross error.)

"He rose *up* from his chair and *un*loosed his bonds" (rose from his chair and loosed his bonds. The prefix "un" has no force, but in certain situations serves the purpose of euphony).

"The vessel is handsomely *fitted up*" (fitted. "Up" is superfluous).

"These garments seem to have been *sewn* badly" (sewed. "Sewn" is a rare form, and should be avoided as liable to confusion with

"sown," which comes from "sow," to sprinkle seed).

"George and Wilmot are fine horsemen, but Wilmot is the best." (The rule from time immemorial has been that when two persons or objects are compared, the comparative degree should be employed. This would require that "better" should be substituted for "best." Good writers, however, make use of the superlative in the manner quoted, and the custom has acquired respectable authority.)

"*Neither* my father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother was present." (Here again the old rule, which forbids the use of "neither" when more than two persons or objects are referred to, is losing its force. Good writers use "neither" as in the sentence quoted.)

"The excursionists filled the *two first* cars" (first two cars. There can be but one first car).

"The servant has *lit* the fire." ("Lighted" is preferable, though "lit" has the authority of Tennyson and other writers.)

"I received a polite invitation from the *Miss Smiths*" (Misses Smith).

"Clarence is the *oldest* of my three children" (eldest. "Elder" and "eldest" are preferable in this special sense of specifying the seniority of the members of a family. In other senses use "older" and "oldest;" as, "my oldest friend," "the oldest building in New York." "My eldest son is three years older than my second son" is a correct sentence).

"Will you join our party this evening?"

"That *depends*" (depends on circumstances).

"I shall have to *summons* him" (summon. "Summons" is a noun).

"You can never make him believe *but what* I meant to offend him" (but that I meant to offend him).

"I am as truthful as *him*" (as he. The sentence in full is, "I am as truthful as he is").

"That awkward fellow has *trod* on the toes of more than one person" (trodden).

"Will you hand me *them there* books?" (those books. The use of "them" for "those" is one of the most unmistakable marks of illiteracy).

"The persons *which* were present were highly pleased" (who were present. Of the

three relative pronouns, "which" is used of things, "who" of persons, "that" of either persons or things. "Our Father, which art in heaven" is an archaic exception).

"*They* that honor me I will honor." (This sentence was once submitted to a teachers' institute, every member of which pronounced it correct. The first word, however, is in the objective case, governed by the verb "honor," and should be "them." This will be readily seen when the words are transposed: I will honor them that honor me.)

"Was it *her* or you who asked the question?" (Was it she or you?)

"If I were *her*, I would be more careful of my words." (If I were she, or, more correctly, if I were in her place.)

"It is remarkable the perseverance he showed." (The perseverance he showed is remarkable. The phrase quoted is a clumsy circumlocution.)

"I purchased a large quantity of books." (I knew of a wealthy person who gave an order for five bushels of books. In his case the word "quantity" was appropriate; but, as a

rule, "a number of books" would be preferable.)

"I *propose* turning over a new leaf." (I purpose turning over a new leaf.)

"*Direct* your reply as below." (Address your reply, preferably.)

"Of two evils choose the *least*." (This expression is a violation of the rule already referred to in the paragraph upon "better" and "best." Nevertheless, there is authority for its use.)

"I am fond of Welsh *rarebit*." (The best authorities say this word should be "rabbit.")

"I have often *swam* across the lake" (swum. "I have swam" is as bad as "I have went." "I have came," "I have saw," are on the same footing, being used only by the uneducated. It is scarcely necessary to specify that the correct forms are: I swim, I swam, I have swum; I go, I went, I have gone; I come, I came, I have come; I see, I saw, I have seen. "He done it," for "he did it," is an equally illiterate mistake).

"*Without* you follow directions you are sure to go wrong." (Unless you follow direc-

tions. The use of "without" for "unless" is a common error.)

"Will you have another apple?"

"Yes, I will take another *one*." (Omit "one.")

"Where would you like to go?"

"*Anywheres*" (anywhere. "Anywheres" and "somewheres" are gross distortions of English).

"How far up the road do you live?"

"A long *ways*" (way). Another case of an utterly superfluous "s."

"She is *very much the lady*." (She is a very ladylike person.)

"He is quite the gentleman." (He is very gentlemanly).

"He *strived* hard to maintain his place" (strove).

"*Nought* that I can do will please him" (naught).

"The number 2,000 contains three oughts" (naughts. It is a common practice to call the character o an "ought" or "aught." The correct word is "naught" which signifies nothing, while "aught" means anything.

There is no such word as "nought," while "ought" is always a verb).

"He was *such* a careless boy that he was continually in trouble." (He was so careless a boy.)

"It is dangerous to go sailing *of* a stormy day" (on a stormy day).

"The fame of Washington is known *through* the world" (throughout).

"He will respond, be he *never* so reluctant" (ever so reluctant). "Never so" is used in the Bible, but has become obsolete.

"The country along the lower Mississippi is often *overflown*" (overflowed). "Flown" is part of the verb "fly," and not of "flow."

"*Previous* to his sailing, he bade his friends good-by" (previously to, or before sailing).

"I doubt *if* he ever received your letter." (I doubt whether, etc.)

"He *had no right* to answer so insulting a letter." (This phrase is often used when what the speaker really means is, "He was under no obligation to answer," etc.)

"It is of no use *insisting*, for I shall refuse." (It is no use to insist, or it is useless to insist.)

"There is no doubt *but* that all will be present." (Omit "but." This error is a common one.)

"The price was *near* twenty dollars" (nearly or almost).

"Your *exceeding* kind letter is appreciated" (exceedingly).

"Subscriptions are desired to be paid in promptly." (It is desired that subscriptions be paid promptly.)

"We *grow* our own vegetables." ("Raise" is preferable. In some parts of our country a landlord has been heard to say that he can "sleep" a certain number of persons, or "eat" so many. This method of speech is convenient, perhaps, and readily understood. Nevertheless it is somewhat startling when heard for the first time.)

"The teacher *was* no sooner gone than the school was in an uproar." (The teacher had no sooner gone, etc.)

"General Grant *was* now retired from public life" (had now retired).

"The four monkeys held *each other's* tails" (one another's).

"The two men beat *one another*" (each other. "One another" is used in speaking of more than two, "each other" of two only).

"Well, young man, who *may you be?*" (who are you?)

"The character of the American Indians, since their association with the white men, *is* much degenerated" (has much degenerated).

"The soil is so poor that little is grown *besides* weeds and grass" (with the exception of weeds and grass).

"A hundred persons were *drownded*" (drowned, of course).

"*Whom* do you think I am?" (who. See paragraph XV).

"We prefer to be *beholding* to no one" (beholden. "Beholding" is obsolete).

"The steeple is three hundred *foot* high" (feet. The singular form is used in such compound expressions as "a twelve-inch rule," "a twenty-four foot ring").

"The former friends are at *loggerheads*" (at variance, though there is authority for the expression given).

"He was born *at* Philadelphia" (in Philadelphia).

"Martin Van Buren was born *in* Kinderhook, N. Y., in 1782" (at Kinderhook. The distinction is that when a country or large city is referred to, the preposition "in" should be employed, but if the place is small and unimportant, "at" is appropriate).

"There is nothing *to* it" (in it. "To" in this sense is as bad as "into"—see paragraph XXIV).

"The town was captured and recaptured no *less* than a dozen times" (no fewer).

"*Such another* victory will destroy the army" (another such victory).

"He lives *some distance* from your house" (at some distance).

"When I knocked, I was directed to enter *in*." (Omit "in.")

"Will you take an apple or a peach?"

"Both *of them*, if you please." (Omit "of them.")

"Whenever he tries to run, he *always* falls *down*." ("Always" and "down" are superfluous.)

"Shadows lengthen toward the *latter* end of the day." (Omit "latter.")

"First *of all*, let us resolve to keep our tempers." (Omit "of all." This is the rule, because "of all" is not necessary to the sentence; but pleonasm, or the use of unnecessary words, is permissible where a special emphasis is desired, and perhaps the sentence quoted is a case in point.)

"Charley Ross was sought throughout the *whole* United States." (Here, again, the rule calls for the omission of "whole," but, as before, the sentence seems to be weakened by such omission.)

"I declined your invitation and I will tell you *for* why." (Leave out "for." The quoted expression is sometimes used even by educated persons.)

"The stone was covered *over* with curious inscriptions." (The word "over" is unnecessary.)

"The plotters combined *together* to destroy him." (Omit "together.")

"John and I *both* agreed to decline the proposition." (Omit "both.")

"I have finished my argument."

"And I acquiesce *with* you." (Say "I agree with you," or "I acquiesce in your views.")

"I don't feel *good*" (well. See paragraph XVI).

"He said *as how* the matter was not open to consideration." (He said that the matter was not open to consideration. "As how" is unpardonable.)

"When the pin pricked him he exclaimed *O!*" (Oh!)

"*Oh*, Lord, renew within us a right spirit." (O Lord. The words "O" and "oh" are often used improperly. When you address a person directly, use "O," and place the exclamation point not immediately after it, but at the end of the sentence. "Oh" expresses a sudden emotion, like "hush!" or "stop!" and the exclamation point should be placed next to the interjection. The capital "O" should always be employed, while "Oh" may begin with a small or capital letter, according to its situation.)

"He put some liquor in the lemonade

unbeknown to me" (unknown. The word "unbeknownst" is still more objectionable).

"The boarders will be treated as *one* of the family" (as members of the family, since "boarders" is plural).

"I *lit on* a very graphic passage" (met with, or found).

"Received *of* John Smith twenty dollars" (from John Smith).

"The house is building." (Although this form of expression is open to technical objection, it has the sanction of the best authorities.)

"I could not forbear *from* granting his request." (Omit "from.")

"I am afraid I shall *dis*commode you" (incommode).

"I *am thinking* that a great mistake has been made." (I think.)

During the delivery of an able discourse a certain doctor of divinity recently made use of this expression: "It will never happen, *I don't believe*." The absurdity of the statement is apparent.

"It is worth a person's while to remember

the *above* suggestions" (foregoing, since the position of most of the printed suggestions may be below instead of above these lines).

"How do you feel?"

"Not *overly* well." ("Not very well." There is no such word as "overly.")

"I have *quit* smoking" (have *left off* or *stopped*).

"The *avocation* of a physician is an arduous one." "*Avocation*" is properly what calls one away from one's vocation. Its use as synonymous with "vocation," though common, and though it has such good authority as Macaulay, is to be avoided.

"*Directly* I came in, I sat down." ("*As soon as* I came in I sat down." The use of the adverb "directly" as a conjunction is a mistake prevalent in England.)

"He was noted for the *equanimity* of his mind." (This is a queer tautology. The word "mind" is a repetition of the latter part of "equanimity," which is derived from the Latin *animus*, mind. Say, "He was noted for his equanimity.")

"It is *excessively* warm." (This is another

example of meaningless exaggeration. "Very warm" is preferable.)

"*Firstly*, I shall treat of adjectives." (*First* is preferable.)

"It *never seems* to have been thought of." ("It *seems never* to have been thought of.")

"Ladies' Cabin." (Here the word "woman" is in better taste. This misuse of the words "lady" and "gentleman" is common.)

"The apple was cut in *half*" (cut into *halves*).

"This is better than *what* that is." (Omit *what*.)

"Well, Dick, *how's* things?" (This form of salutation is common. If the abbreviation is insisted upon, it should be, "*How're* things?")

People who call asparagus "sparrowgrass," cucumber "cowcumber," and radishes "redishes," are those who employ the double negative, and say "Not by no means," "There ain't nothing," "I didn't see not a single person," etc. Grammatically, all double negatives are equivalent to an affirmative; for if an allegation is not so *by no means*, it must

be so by *some means;* and if there isn't *nothing*, there must be *something*.

"The people *as* I saw were well satisfied with their lot." (The people that or whom I saw.)

"*The* most of the men were tall; he is staying at Hotel Hamilton." (Omit "the" in the first instance and supply it in the second, to introduce "Hotel." We see certain hotels referred to as "Hotel Bartholdi," "Hotel St. George," etc. In all these cases, the article "the" should precede and form part of the title. It may be mentioned here that Walter Scott and other careful writers never abbreviate the word *Saint* into *St.*, but the practice in America has become so common that its use must be admitted.)

"She plays the piano *considerable.*" (She plays the piano a good deal.)

"I *am through with* my dinner." (I have finished.)

"Dollars are not *plenty* with him just now" (plentiful).

"He got mad." (The meaning of this is unmistakable. "Mad" in the sense of be-

coming angry is found in Shakspere, and the use is common in conversation; but the best modern writers do not so employ it.)

"I blame it *on* you." (I blame you for it.)

"He *allowed* it was time to go home" (*said* it was time to go home. "Allowed," in this sense, is common in the South and West).

"There is *apt* to be trouble." "Where would I be *liable* to find him?" ("There is *likely* to be trouble." "Where should I *probably* find him?")

"It was a bad railway accident, but none of the passengers *were* fatally injured" ("*was* fatally injured" is preferable. The word none is an abbreviation of *no one*, and should, according to logic and grammar, be followed by a singular verb, although the use of the plural is common even with good writers).

"I met a *black and white* man" (*a black and a white* man, provided two distinct persons are meant; otherwise the expression means that I met a man who was both white and black. The articles "a" and "the" must be repeated when they are applied to separate objects).

"The aim and object of the institution *are* to impart a thorough education" (aim and object *is*. When the two subjects are so closely connected as to convey the same idea, a singular verb is preferable. The difference between *aim* and *object* in the sentence is not distinguishable. If it were so, it would be necessary to say "the aim and the object," according to the rule given in the preceding paragraph, and then the plural verb would be correct).

"I called at the gentleman's house, *who had sent* me an invitation" (at the house of the gentleman, who had sent me an invitation. The other expression would seem to imply that it was the house which invited me).

"I like you more than *they*." (If you mean that I like you more than certain others like you, the sentence is correct; but if I wish to say that my esteem for you surpasses my esteem for certain other persons, it should be "I like you more than them.")

"He called upon *lieutenant* Smith. Mr. Smith's son is a *Lieutenant* of cavalry." (*Lieutenant Smith;* is a *lieutenant*. In the first sen-

tence, the word lieutenant should be capitalized, because it is a part of the name of the individual; but in the second it is not. This distinction is frequently lost sight of by writers.)

XXXVIII.

The Use and Misuse of Foreign Words and Expressions.

Finally avoid, so far as possible, the use of foreign words and expressions in conversation (unless with one who is equally familiar with the language) and in writing. You may impress the reader with your attainments, but you will obscure your meaning, and gain the discredit, whether justly or not, of affectation. The English language is so rich in resources that a person with ideas need find no difficulty in giving them expression, either in conversation or upon paper, without calling in the aid of a foreign tongue. Our most eloquent speakers and most graphic writers do not feel obliged to travel outside of their language. Then how much less excuse for me and you to do so!

XXXIX.

Formation of the Plural of Nouns.

The regular plural of nouns is formed by adding *s* or *es* to the singular; but this rule has so many exceptions, that the most important are appended.

Common nouns ending in *y*, after a consonant, change *y* into *i* and add *es*. Thus, fly, flies; fairy, fairies; fancy, fancies; lady, ladies; vanity, vanities.

If the *y* is preceded by a vowel, the plural is formed by adding only *s*. Thus, attorney, attorneys; chimney, chimneys; kidney, kidneys; turkey, turkeys; valley, valleys.

Certain words ending in *f*, *ff*, and *fe*, form their plural in *ves*; as shelf, shelves; staff, staves; knife, knives; life, lives.

A few words have the same form for both singular and plural; as sheep, deer.

It is said that a merchant once wished to order twelve implements known by the name of a tailor's goose. When he came to write "geese," he could not persuade himself that

it was correct. After much thought he finally avoided the difficulty thus:

"Please send me a tailor's goose. N.B. —Send me eleven others at the same time."

Now, since the name of the implement is "goose," its plural must be "geese," and the order for one dozen tailor's "geese" is correct. This word, like others which follow, forms its plural very irregularly. Child, children; man, men; mouse, mice; ox, oxen; tooth, teeth; foot, feet; woman, women. "Brother" has both the regular form "brothers" and the irregular and archaic form "brethren."

Many words adopted from foreign languages retain their original plural forms, while some take the English plural also. Thus: analysis, analyses; automaton, automata or automatons; bandit, banditti or bandits; beau, beaux or beaus; cherub, cherubim or cherubs; crisis, crises; datum, data; fungus, fungi or funguses; focus, foci; ignis fatuus, ignes fatui; madame, mesdames; memorandum, memoranda or memorandums; radius, radii or radiuses; seraph,

seraphim or seraphs; terminus, termini; vertebra, vertebræ; vortex, vortices or vortexes.

Certain compounds, in which the principal word stands first, pluralize that word. Thus, aide-de-camp, aides-de-camp; billet-doux, billets-doux; attorney-at-law, attorneys-at-law; commander-in-chief, commanders-in-chief; son-in-law, sons-in-law; man-of-war, men-of-war; hanger-on, hangers-on.

Most compounds vary the last word. Thus, dormouse, dormice; court-yard, court-yards; forget-me-not, forget-me-nots; handful, handfuls; spoonful, spoonfuls; goose-quill, goose-quills; maid-servant, maid-servants; step-son, step-sons; tooth-brush, tooth-brushes.

A number of compounds vary both parts. Thus, woman-servant, women-servants; man-servant, men-servants; man-child, men-children; woman-singer, women-singers.

XL.

Pronunciation.

The limits of this work preclude instruction in the proper pronunciation of words. A study

of the list given at the close of this section will demonstrate how prone we are to pronounce words incorrectly. Most persons say "o-leo-marj-a-reen," for "o-leo-marg-a-reen," "en'er-vate'" for "e-nerv'ate," etc., and make many similar errors.

In our haste, we are apt to clip many of our syllables, especially slighting the terminal *g*. We say readin', writin', fallin', walkin', goin', etc. Another common error is the sounding of "duty" as if it were "dooty," "student," as "stoodent," and so on. Of these two mistakes the former is especially prevalent in England, the latter in America.

We should aim to give each syllable the pronunciation to which it is entitled, without making our effort apparent. At the same time, it is a question whether a faulty pronunciation is not preferable to the laborious exactitude of some persons, who say "i-ron," for "iurn," and seem to aim to sound each letter in a word.

A striking presentation of the difficulty of attaining the correct pronunciation of many

words is shown in the following extract from the Washington *Post*:

A HEATED ARGUMENT.

It is a lamentable fact that a difference of opinion as to pronunciation sometimes becomes provocative of irascible behavior. Often what ought to be a didactic joust degenerates into altercation, amid a Tartarean avalanche of words.

Not long since a robust, disputative collegian—his clothes of the latest Pall Mall cut, his carmine bifurcated necktie ornamented with a solitaire, his hair dressed with oleomargarine and perfumed with ambergris, his face innocent of hirsute adornment, but his mouth guilty of nicotine—informed a senile splenetic lawyer that he did not pronounce according to the dictionary.

"For," observed the young man, with an air of research, "in your Tuesday's address you said that the sight of cerements sufficed to enervate an attorney; that a salamander treated for obesity with prussic acid and pomegranate rind, was disinclined to serpen-

tine movements; that during a soporific discourse delivered to a concourse of youths, eleven exiguous, sacrilegious dwarfs, though under surveillance, made grimaces at an aged man sitting on a three-legged stool; that one of these supple, exile fellows of interesting genealogy, being rebuked, looked contrite, but immediately frescoed a coadjutor's Elizabethan collar with cocaine and marmalade; that in an Aldine edition of a legal work you read of a lugubrious man afflicted with virulent varioloid and purulent eczema, for which a jocund gynecologist injected iodine and cayenne pepper with a syringe warmed in a chaldron of tepid syrup a malpractice suit being the result. By the way, you have a dictionary?"

"Dictionary," replied the lawyer, "pugh! It is a granary from which the pronunciation fiend fills his commissariat with orthoepic romances and vagaries—which to him grow into a philologic fetich; and this fetichism finds outward expression in a supercilious ostentation of erudite vacuity."

Nothing daunted, the young man continued:

"You said, 'According to precedent it was obligatory upon him to plait his hair as his nomad parents had done, and precedent to stepping under the mistletoe he indulged in fulsome praise of himself, hoping thereby to induce a favorite girl to join him. But she, being averse to undergoing an ordeal so irrefragably embarrassing, refused; whereupon his features became immobile with chagrin.' This is a verbatim quotation. You sometimes consult a dictionary?"

"Young man," retorted the lawyer, his aquiline nose quivering with derisive disdain, "to illustrate the inconsistence of a dictionary, see how demagogy is pronounced; then turn to pedagogy."

"Pardon me, I was speaking of you. In your peroration this occurs: 'An incognito communist, being commandant on the frontier, in one of his hunting expeditions came upon an Indian, who, to the accompaniment of the soughing wind, was softly playing a flageolet, for the purpose of quieting a wounded hydrophobic Bengal tiger penned up in a hovel. The colonel's companion, a

Malay from Singapore, acting as seneschal or pursuivant, suggested houghing the rampant animal, or giving it some dynamite, morphine, and saline yeast. A noose was adjusted, and the nauseous dose administered, whereupon the combative tiger, coming in premature contact with a dilapidated divan, bade adieu to things sublunary, and proceeded to grace the empyrean.' You have a dictionary?"

The old man becoming angered at the raillery of this question, and at the cherubic smile of superiority with which it was asked, launched forth in an objurgating tirade: insisting that he did not regard himself as sacrificable to the juggernaut of orthoepy.

"Have I a dictionary?" thundered he: "dictionary be hanged!"

Here archangels began the sonorous chanting of the music of a bolero, and the disputants adjourned *sine die*.

XLI.

Style.

After giving a somewhat extended list of common errors in writing and speaking, it is

appropriate to offer some general suggestions regarding style. Since the most perfect acting is that in which there is no acting, so it may be said that the best style is that in which the writer has no thought of style.

Richard Grant White once spoke of the English language as a grammarless tongue. Grammarians differ so widely in their views, and the various technical rules are so involved with exceptions, that the student is often filled with impatience, if not disgust. The best advice to an inexperienced writer is to strive to express his thoughts simply, in clear, straightforward language, with his sentences short enough to be kept well "in hand." When a sentence is becoming involved with phrases and clauses, break it up into short ones. Avoid the use of long words, and study the style of the best authors, whose meaning is as clear as the crystal waters of a mountain brook.

An editor once sent me a request concerning a delayed article. Instead of asking me to make haste, he wrote, "Please expedite its transit." In a sermon preached by a well

known clergyman, he quoted the expression, "Paul may plant and Apollos may water," but he "improved" it thus: "Paul may plant and Apollos may properly irrigate." In an address to a number of children on the subject of temperance, I heard a speaker attempt to show the distinction between sweet and hard cider. "My young friends," said he, "the intoxicating qualities are generated in the process of fermentation."

Compare such cumbrous phrases as this with the clear flowing sentences of Macaulay, Scott, Irving, Hawthorne, Bryant, and others whose works are a source of continual delight. It is impossible to make your language too simple, too direct, or too clear. Our leading dailies are often models in this respect, and none more so than the New York *Sun*. Not only on the editorial page of this journal are examples given of clear, terse, incisive English, but its descriptive articles are frequently perfect in their way.

The basic rule is first to have something to say, and then to say it in the most direct

terms possible. Hawthorne, whose work is a fine example of purity of style, once expressed his delight over a letter submitted to him by one of his literary friends. It did not contain a superfluous word. The writer said what she intended to say and then stopped. Not only that, but she used short, simple, Anglo-Saxon words, whose meaning could not possibly be misunderstood.

In answer to his inquiries, Hawthorne's friend told him that the letter was written by a servant girl, who was learning the English language. She knew what she wished to say, and said it with a care and pains that left no room for improvement.

A Quaker once said to his servant:

"John, I wish thee to take the saddle from the back of the bay horse and lay it upon the ground; then take the saddle from the gray horse and lay it upon the ground by the side of the other saddle; then take the saddle which thou hast taken from the back of the bay horse and place it upon the back of the gray horse; next take up the saddle which thou hast removed from the back of the gray

horse and place it upon the back of the bay horse. See that both saddles are fastened securely in place."

John looked at his employer and asked:

"Why didn't you tell me to change the saddles?"

Here is the manner in which some one recently defined his creed, as published in a paper called *Freedom:*

"I am a believer in the idea of thought-thingness.

"In the negative suggestiveness of ideo-impressionism lies the receptivity of disease, the destructive influence of deterioration and decay undermining house of character and tenement of clay.

"Though both dynamic force and static energy are necessary to the completion of things, in the worship by *homo brutalis* of dynamic force alone we see brutality triumphant in our religious, social, political, and industrial affairs. Hence sensation-mongery as seen in high-kicking females on stage boards, Jehovah-Zeboath in religious circles, Col. Mazuma in the political arena, and Queen

Fashion in all her eccentricities and freaksomeness in the social whirl."

As a contrast to this, the shortest and most impressive verse in the Bible contains but two words, "Jesus wept." No human pen can improve upon that simple but profoundly pathetic expression. Any attempt to qualify or amplify it would weaken it.

On the 4th of July, 1864, the soldiers' monument was dedicated at Gettysburg. Edward Everett, one of the most learned and accomplished of orators, delivered the address. It was worthy of his great reputation, but can any reader of this little book recall a single paragraph?

Abraham Lincoln, homely, honest, plain, and straightforward, was called upon to make a few "remarks." He said:

"Four-score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war.

We are met to dedicate a portion of it as the final resting-place of those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

"But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow, this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will very little note nor long remember what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here.

"It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work that they have thus far so nobly carried on. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people,

for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

This brief speech attracted little attention at the time, but it was not long before its simplicity, beauty, and lofty sentiment awoke admiration everywhere. It was praised by the critics as a masterpiece of American eloquence, and has taken its place among the classics of our language. It contains no foreign words, no quotations, no attempts at oratory, no high-sounding phrases, but is as simple, direct, and manly as the great President who uttered it.

It was Abraham Lincoln who pronounced the following verse, written by the late Oliver Wendell Holmes, the finest example of pathos in the English language:

"The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has pressed
In their bloom;
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb."

Here, too, the words are simple, none containing more than two syllables, and most of

them but one. No word can be spared. Each has its function, and all are equally indispensable.

Some writers think it in good taste to refer to a fire as "the devouring element;" to oysters as "succulent bivalves;" to tea as "the cup which cheers but not inebriates;" to say "he passed away in indigent circumstances," for "he died poor," and so on.

Here is a sentence which its writer doubtless thought fine writing:

"He was a dipsomaniac for a lengthy period, but strove hard to acquire the mastership of his wayward inclinations; thrice he threw up the sponge, and his last state became worse than the first."

How much better for the writer to say what he means!

"For a long time he was addicted to drink. He strove hard to master the appetite, but after three failures gave up the struggle."

Enough has been said to show the necessity of clearness and precision in speaking and writing. Let us add a few suggestions—first:

Brevity.—Study brevity. Say what you

wish to say and no more. A short sentence is always clearer than a long one. When your composition is completed, go over it and strike out all the attempts at fine writing. See how many words can be removed without touching the idea you are seeking to convey. Study to compress the idea or ideas into the fewest possible words. When no superfluous ones remain, there will probably be no further room for improvement.

TAUTOLOGY.—By tautology we mean the saying of a thing twice or more, when nothing is gained by it.

How often, after a person has told an amusing anecdote, and has joined in the merriment thereby created, he immediately repeats the anecdote, or perhaps the part of it which caused the laughter; and how much weaker it always sounds upon a second hearing. It is like the feeble echo of a full-throated shout.

I recall a religious work published by a leading house in London, and written by a well known bishop. It is a life of the Saviour meant for children. Many of its statements are made not twice but three times, often in

identical words. The result is that what should be the most effective passages are twaddle.

A public man on the Pacific coast, when called upon, some time ago, to address his friends, said: "I am glad to see you have such an enjoyable time enjoying the enjoyment." It is fair to assume that if the gentleman had been allowed a few minutes in which to prepare himself, he would have done better. He couldn't have done worse.

We often have sentences where the same idea is repeated in different words. Thus, "Less ability is necessary, but more time is required." This is better rendered, "Less ability and more time are required."

Verbosity.—Some speakers and writers seem so gifted with the "power of words" that in the expression of a simple thought they employ many more than is necessary. The example of the Friend who ordered his servant to exchange the saddles is a case in point.

A pupil at boarding school received a command from his father to return home. Upon

his arrival there, his parent was absent. The son thus wrote to him:

"Upon receiving your letter, I packed my trunk, hired an expressman to take it to the station, bought my ticket, and left on the first train."

He would have done better by writing:

"Upon receipt of your letter, I returned home at once," or "I did as directed."

The late Professor John Nichol pointedly illustrates the awkwardness of long and involved sentences by quoting the following:

"Finally, Mill, the youngest of the three—he was but twenty-nine when he wrote the passage which I have quoted—had for several years been writing in the *Westminster* and other reviews articles from which it was to be inferred that when his courageous and truth-loving father, and that father's friend, Bentham, should be gone from the earth, they would leave behind them, in this heir of their hopes, one fit to be an expositor of their idea through another generation, but who was likely rather to look right and left in that generation for himself, and to honor his de-

scent, not by mere adhesion to what he had inherited, but by an open-mindedness that should even solicit contrary impressions and push on passionately at every break of day in the quest of richer truth. . . . Whatever other men, seniors or coevals of these three, may be named as having co-operated with them, either as urging views of their own or as continuing the older philosophic influences, certain it is that it is to Carlyle, Hamilton, and Mill that all would point as having been the most prominent leaders of free or uncovenanted British speculation during the last thirty years."

The good thoughts in the foregoing are more clearly expressed thus:

"Mill, the youngest of the group, though but twenty-nine when he wrote the passage quoted above, had for several years been known as a leading writer in the *Westminster* and other reviews. From the tone and quality of his articles it might already have been predicted that the ideas of his father and of Bentham, his father's friend, were likely to be expounded to the next generation in a

manner worthy of the bold thinkers who had put them forth. His readers felt that John Stuart Mill was sure to honor his descent by no blind adhesion to inherited belief, but by a keen regard to the circumstances of his time, a mind ever open to receive various impressions, and a zeal ever on the alert for the pursuit of truth. Others, the seniors or contemporaries of those three, may be named as their fellow-workers, either in the advocacy of new views or the transmission of older philosophic influences; but Carlyle, Hamilton, and Mill are universally admitted to have been, during the last thirty years, the most prominent leaders of independent British speculation."

One friend made a special request of another, who replied as follows:

"After a full and fair consideration of your request (and I assure you I have taken time to weigh it carefully in all its bearings), I am obliged to say, much as I regret to do so, that I am convinced it will be impossible to grant the favor you have asked at my hands."

Let us try to condense this refusal, without weakening its point:

"After considering your request, I am obliged to say that it will be impossible for me to grant it."

Suppose we try again:

"I am obliged to refuse your request."

Once more:

"No."

The single monosyllable contains the refusal conveyed in so many words, but it is curt and would give offense. We can afford to be somewhat verbose for the sake of courtesy, so the second form is perhaps the best.

The art of condensation is a desirable one. Many an ambitious reporter has felt a sinking of the heart when he saw the editor run his blue pencil through three-fourths of his labored effort, but it was the best service that could have been rendered the beginner, as he was sure to acknowledge after a few years of experience.

AMBIGUITY.—Sometimes an idea is so clear in the mind of a writer that he thinks he has made it plain to his reader, when he has

failed to do so. The chief causes of ambiguity are carelessness, ignorance, and a straining after "fine writing."

"I will accept thanks and *pay*." (The word *pay* may be either a verb or noun, the variation in meaning being marked.)

"I will recline on the grass and *rock*." (The same ambiguity is caused by the uncertainty whether *rock* is used as a noun or verb.)

"The sentiment of Europe was divided as to the *revolting* South." (*Revolting* may have an offensive or inoffensive meaning.)

"I wish you to *overlook* my manuscript." (It is preferable to say *examine* or *look over* for *overlook*.)

"The colored woman *wants washing*." (The presumption is that the colored woman wishes to wash garments for others and to receive pay therefor, but the expression may easily be misunderstood.)

One cause of ambiguity is the slovenly use of pronouns. The repetition of *which*, *he*, *her*, *it*, and *they* involves many a sentence in a fog from which it is impossible to evolve a well defined meaning.

Here are a few examples:

"*He* told him that if *he* was late in keeping the appointment, *he* might as well remain at home, for *he* would fail to accomplish the purpose of the meeting. *He* assured *him* that if living *he* would be at the spot *he* had designated."

"Mary said to Susan that nothing could be more delightful than an excursion into the country at that season of the year. *She* was certain to enjoy it more than anything *she* had ever experienced. *She* said *she* must accompany *her*, for *she* would lose half the pleasure if *she* had not *her* with *her*."

The way to free these sentences from ambiguity is obvious. Substitute the names of the persons for some of the pronouns; or to avoid too much repetition of the names use such paraphrases as "his friend," "her companion," etc.

The use of obsolete, rare, and unfamiliar words is as a rule a disagreeable affectation. Avoid such curious specimens as yclept, whilom, belikely, peradventure, erstwhile, erst, behest, inly.

XLII.

William Cullen Bryant's Black List.

Among the best exemplars of a pure and graceful style was the late William Cullen Bryant, one of the most honored of American poets, and for many years editor of the *Evening Post* of New York City. With a view of aiding the various writers connected with his journal in the acquirement of a clear and correct method of expression, he furnished them the following list of words (afterward added to by his successors) whose use they were asked to avoid:

Above and over (for "more than"). Artiste (for "artist"). Aspirant. Authoress. Beat (for "defeat"). Bagging (for "capturing"). Balance (for "remainder"). Banquet (for "dinner" or "supper"). Bogus. Casket (for "coffin"). Claimed (for "asserted"). Collided. Commence (for "begin"). Compete. Cortège (for "procession"). Cotemporary (for "contemporary"). Couple (for "two"). Darkey (for "negro"). Day before yesterday (for "the day before yesterday"). Débût.

Decease (as a verb). Democracy (applied to a political party). Develop (for "expose"). Devouring element (for "fire"). Donate. Employé. Enacted (for "acted"). Endorse (for "approve"). En route. "Esq." Graduate (for "is graduated"). Gents (for "gentlemen"). "Hon." House (for "House of Representatives"). Humbug. Inaugurate (for "begin"). In our midst. Item (for "particle, extract, or paragraph"). Is being done, and all passives of this form. Jeopardize. Jubilant (for "rejoicing"). Juvenile (for "boy"). Lady (for "wife"). Last (for "latest"). Lengthy (for "long"). Leniency (for "lenity"). Loafer. Loan or loaned (for "lend" or "lent"). Located. Majority (relating to places or circumstances, for "most"). Mrs. President, Mrs. Governor, Mrs. General, and all similar titles. Mutual (for "common"). Official (for "officer"). Ovation. On yesterday. Over his signature. Pants (for "pantaloons"). Parties (for "persons"). Partially (for "partly"). Past two weeks (for "last two weeks," and all similar expressions relating to a definite time). Poetess. Por-

tion (for "part"). Posted (for "informed"). Progress (for "advance"). Quite (prefixed to "good," "large," etc.). Raid (for "attack"). Realized (for "obtained"). Reliable (for "trustworthy"). Rendition (for "performance"). Repudiate (for "reject" or "disown"). Retire (as an active verb). Rev. (for "the Rev."). Rôle (for "part"). Roughs. Rowdies. Secesh. Sensation (for "noteworthy event"). Standpoint (for "point of view"). Start, in the sense of setting out. State (for "say"). Taboo. Talent (for "talents" or "ability"). Talented. Tapis. The Deceased. War (for "dispute or disagreement").

XLIII.

Punctuation.

A rudimentary knowledge of punctuation is necessary in order that a writer's meaning shall be unmistakable. Without such knowledge, the most carefully formed sentence may have its significance destroyed or perverted.

There is an old anecdote which tells how a barber (not a "tonsorial artist") had the fol-

lowing lines painted on the outside of his shop (not "shaving parlor"):

"What do you think?
I'll shave you for nothing and give you a drink."

The customer who availed himself of this promise, and refused payment, was confronted, within the shop, by the same lines thus punctuated:

"What! do you think
I'll shave you for nothing and give you a drink?"

Among the most persistent violators of grammar and the rules of punctuation are some of the men who furnish the painted signs that adorn—or disfigure—our streets. Directly across the avenue from where I am writing these lines there is a well painted sign, consisting of eleven words. Between every two words is a period, while at the end, the only place where a period is proper, there is none.

I recall another sign of my boyhood which was a continual temptation to irreverence on the part of those who saw it. It ran thus:

"Adam Young Tailor."

Still another was displayed in front of a grocery store, whose number was 111. The omission of a period caused it to read:

"111 Potatoes for Sale."

Some years ago, the following sign, displayed by a dyer of satin, in Topeka, Kansas, suggested the old adage that the prince of darkness is not always as black as he is painted:

"Satan Dyed."

I once asked a sign painter why he placed a period at the end of each word. He replied that it was necessary to show the separation of the words. Something of the kind may really be required where space is limited, and it is allowable to use the period, provided it is placed not at the bottom of the letters but half way to the top. Thus,

"DRY·GOODS·AND·GROCERIES·FOR·SALE."

This is an ancient custom, and offends neither good taste nor accuracy.

Punctuation is governed by the single requirement of helping to make the writer's meaning clear. Its rules are not iron-clad.

The tendency is to use only such points as are absolutely necessary. A page of printed matter may be punctuated in several different ways, and yet each way be correct. In some publishing establishments certain rules prevail which vary from those governing elsewhere.

Many books are published which do not contain the colon mark, and yet no one can say that that sign is not a legitimate one. A learned friend, in whose judgment I have great confidence, read the manuscript of this work, at my request. When he had finished, I observed that he had struck out nearly every hyphen. He insists that the mark has little if any use in our language, except to mark the division of a word at the end of a line.

A sufficient knowledge of punctuation is so readily acquired that I shall offer only a few suggestions. When I was a boy, living in the country, I acquired the art by studying a few rules given at the end of a grammar, and afterward by having some one read an extract to me, while I wrote and punctuated it as I thought correct. A comparison with the

printed copy showed wherein I had erred, and thus a facility was speedily acquired.

The Period or Full Stop (.).

When a sentence is completed, place a period at the end. This rule is so plain that no one can misunderstand or forget it.

A period should also follow every abbreviation. Thus: J. Wm. Jones and E. R. V. Smith, A.M.; Thomas Y. Brown, LL.D.; J. Q. Robinson, D.D.

The Colon (:).

As I have stated, with many writers the colon is falling into disuse. Nevertheless, it has a distinct use, and cannot be well spared. I find the proofreader has a habit of turning my colons into semicolons, no matter how carefully I employ them.

The rule regarding the use of the colon is that it follows a sentence which, while grammatically complete, requires something added to give it full force. Thus, "Try to live by the Golden Rule: nothing will pay you better."

The colon is continually employed in the

authorized version of the Bible, where the fine shades of meaning are well preserved.

Despite the growing disuse of the colon, there are a number of situations in which it should always be employed. For example, after "as follows." Thus, "The list of articles is as follows: tea, sugar, etc."

It is used also, when the sense is "as follows," though these words are not used. Thus, "When the orator took the floor, he said: 'My friends,' and so on."

"The only rule without an exception is this: 'There is no rule without an exception.'"

"The whole matter may be summed up: 'Righteousness exalteth a nation.'"

With the exception of these and similar instances, it may be said that it is allowable to replace a colon with a period.

The Semicolon (;).

This point denotes a distinct pause between parts of a sentence, but a less break than that indicated by the colon. Its use is very common.

It frequently precedes clauses introduced

by "but" or "for"; for instance, "He bravely faced death; for it is better to die a hero than to live a coward." "Health is wealth; for there can be no enjoyment of life without good health." "The wise man listens to the voice of prudence; but the fool shutteth his ears."

When several clauses depend upon the same word or words, they are generally introduced by semicolons. "He declared that he would never submit; that duty did not require him to do so; that no patriot would yield; that submission was cowardice."

In general, when there is in a sentence a break too marked to be denoted by a comma, the semicolon should be employed. Thus:

"Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage; without o'erflowing, full."

The Comma (,).

The comma represents the shortest natural pause in reading or uttering a sentence. More latitude is permissible in the use of this point than of any other. The tendency is to

discard it where formerly strict rule required its use. It is a tendency to be encouraged; for too many points in a sentence are not only useless but unsightly.

The following rules are worth remembering:

Whenever a person or object is addressed, the name should be followed by a comma; and, if such name occurs in the body of a sentence, it should be inclosed in commas. Illustration—

"John, stand up; have you learned your lesson?"

"I have studied it hard, sir, and I think I understand it."

"Well, my boy, please tell me the name of the first permanent English settlement made within the present limits of the United States."

Where several similar words are used in succession—such as a series of adjectives or a list of nouns—a comma should follow each of them, except, of course, the last one. For example:

"He is an old, tall, emaciated man."

"We deal in books, stationery, pencils, and school supplies."

"He leaps, he runs, he cries aloud with joy."

The comma should also separate pairs of words.

"Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I give my heart and hand to this vote."

Qualifying clauses are marked off by commas. Thus—

"The old farmer, who had spent his life in toil, was compelled to lay aside his implements of labor."

"I wish to tell the gentlemen, if they will listen, some plain truths."

The comma should be used after such words as therefore, nevertheless, too, accordingly, consequently, yes, no, finally, when they introduce a sentence; and on both sides of such words, when they occur in the body of a sentence.

It often marks a pause where a word is understood. Thus—

"To err is human; to forgive, divine" (for "to forgive is divine").

It is generally placed between nouns in apposition, as: "Gerome, the Parisian artist." "Watt, the inventor of the steam engine." But it is well to omit the comma when the nouns in apposition are closely connected. Thus, "Paul the apostle," "Bancroft the historian."

The Interrogation Point (?).

The name of this point suggests its use. When a question is asked it should be followed by an interrogation point. Thus—

"How many quarts make a gallon?" "Are you fond of athletic exercises?" "When will it be convenient for you to call upon me?" "He answered my question by asking, 'Do you suppose I work because I love work?'"

An indirect question—that is, a sentence that reports the substance of a query, without directly asking it—does not require the question mark. Thus—

"He asked me whether I would join him in the enterprise."

"He wished to know how many pounds make a ton."

The Exclamation Point (!).

The exclamation should follow expressions of sudden emotion. Thus—

"Hurrah!" "Fire! fire! fire!" "Arouse!" "Oh!" "Hail to the chief!"

It should be used also in apostrophes, or poetical addresses.

"Rise, thou temple of knowledge!" "Thou that rollest above, round as the shield of my fathers!"

> "O Lord of hosts! Almighty King!
> Behold the sacrifice we bring!
> To every arm Thy strength impart,
> Thy spirit shed through every heart!"

And again—

> "O Caroline, Caroline, child of the sun,
> We can never forget that our hearts have been one,—
> Our foreheads both sprinkled in Liberty's name,
> From the fountain of blood with the finger of flame!"

The exclamation point is sometimes used to emphasize a sarcasm. Thus—

"This defaulter, this despoiler of homes,

this trampler upon our rights, claims to be a patriot!"

This mark should be employed sparingly because of its abruptness. It is seldom appropriate in ordinary composition, though young writers are inclined to use it when a period or some other point is preferable.

The Parenthesis and Dash (( ) —).

These points are often interchangeable. When there is injected into a sentence a clause that has less connection with the rest of the sentence than would be shown by commas, either the parenthesis or dash may be used before and after the inserted clause.

"That's remarkable when I say
It was old in President Holyoke's day.
(One of his boys, perhaps you know,
Died, at one hundred, years ago.)
He took lodgings for rain or shine
Under green bed-clothes in '69."

'My grandmama has said—
Poor old lady, she is dead
Long ago—
That he had a Roman nose,
And his cheek was like a rose
In the snow."

The dash is used where there is a sudden break in the sentence, leaving it incomplete. Thus—

"I have lived five and thirty years—"

"What! as long as that?"

"Yes; I have lived five and thirty years in this house. From it I have seen my father, my mother, and two sisters—"

"Ah! what grief has been thine."

"Cæsar had his Brutus," shouted Patrick Henry; "Charles the First his Cromwell, and George the Third"—"Treason! treason!" interrupted the Speaker and more timid members. In a voice that rang out like the tones of a trumpet, the impassioned orator added—"may profit by their example."

The dash is sometimes used to introduce a quotation or illustration, as it has been employed in many of the foregoing instances.

The Hyphen (-).

When it becomes necessary to divide a word at the end of a printed or written line, the hyphen is used to connect the severed

parts. The division must be made between syllables; a syllable should never be divided.

The hyphen is also used to form compound words. The following are examples:

"A loud-voiced man." "On this never-to-be-forgotten day." "The name of the chief was Man-not-Afraid-of-his-Horses." Some writers go so far as to hyphenate such pairs of words as "well-educated," "badly-fitting," "New-York." It would be almost as reasonable to hyphenate "very-good" and "United-States." The tendency of most writers is to dispense with compound words as far as possible. Many words which Webster's Dictionary formerly recognized as compound, in the latest edition of that standard authority are given either as a single word without the hyphen, or as two separate words.

Quotation Marks (" ").

When a sentence, a clause, or an expression is quoted, it should be inclosed in quotation marks. Thus—

What sweeter sentence is contained in the English language than this: "God is love"?

His reply to every question was: "I decline your request."

"Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn."

"He giveth His beloved sleep."

When a quotation occurs within a quotation, it should be indicated by a single, instead of a double point. A third quotation within the second quotation requires a double point as at first; a fourth takes a single, and so on, the double and single points alternating.

This rule is illustrated by the following, in which the task of punctuating correctly is perhaps greater than the writing of the article itself:

Some time since, I read the following incident:

"John Smith met his brother Jack, and asked him:

"'Jack, where have you been?'

"The brother answered:

"'I spent last week in the city of New York, where I called upon Cousin Tom, who had just returned from California.

"'"Tom," said I, "how do you like the Pacific coast?"

"'"Fairly well,' he replied, "it has a superb climate, but I was startled when awakened in the middle of the night by the trembling of the house, and I heard people shouting:

"'"'Earthquake! earthquake!'

"'"But I soon became accustomed to it, and, unless the shock was severe, did not rise from my bed."'"

Capitals.

Capital letters should mark—

The first personal pronoun "I," and the interjection "O."

The first word of a sentence, or of a line of verse.

All proper names, distinguished titles, and names of the Deity.

The principal words in the caption of an article.

The first word of a direct quotation.

Derivatives from proper nouns, such as American, Irish, English, etc.

Exceptions to the last rule are gaining

ground. Thus, common usage sanctions india rubber, timothy (the name of a species of grass), etc. The tendency is to relinquish the use of capitals in doubtful cases.

Italics.

Italics are employed for the purpose of emphasis. It will be noted that frequent use of them has been made throughout this work, for the sake of greater clearness; but in ordinary writing the fewer employed the better.

THE END.

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